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MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Meeting Engagements in Modern Operations

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Meeting Engagements in Modern Operations

by

General-Mayor N. Smirnov

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As is known, the NATO command is endeavoring to ensure that it will have conditions favorable to the delivery of a preemptive attack and to the transferring of the combat actions of its ground forces to the territory of the Warsaw Pact countries from the very beginning of a war by establishing ahead of time a powerful offensive grouping of troops. A variant of this action, only on a smaller scale, was employed in 1967 when Israel attacked the Arab countries. (This variant was worked out with the participation of NATO specialists, primarily specialists of the Bundeswehr.)

The imperialists endeavor to conceal their aggressive intentions in every possible way. However, once in a while some arrogant revanchist will let the cat out of the bag. "Attack as soon as the opportunity presents itself. It is precisely this method of warfare which the West must employ in its clash with the East."* This, for example, is what is advocated by one of the founders of the Bundeswehr, General Heusinger, the former chairman of the NATO permanent military committee. The offensive character of the military doctrine of the Federal Republic of Germany is recognized by several prominent representatives of the Pentagon. For example, Hugh B. Hester, a high-ranking American general and a specialist on German affairs, contends that "the German general staff has never planned a defensive war and certainly does not intend to plan one now".**

Operational concepts for the "forward strategy", in which the offensive is considered the basic variant of action, are being tested and worked out in numerous NATO troop exercises and staff exercises. Accordingly, in the BLACK LION exercises conducted by NATO troops in September 1968 near the Czechoslovak border, both sides for almost four days primarily engaged in highly mobile offensive actions, the course of

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*Charles R. Allen, Heusinger of the Fourth Reich, Progress Publishing House, 1967, p. 293.
**Ibid.

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which, it was admitted by the West German periodical Wehrkunde, "simulates a possible military conflict in Europe".* 50X1-HUM

Therefore, despite the propaganda efforts of the NATO military-political leadership to make their concepts appear to be defensive in nature, their "forward strategy" theory and the training of their armed forces persuasively testify to the fact that the aggressive plans of the imperialists are based upon a surprise attack and the waging of wide-scale offensive actions against the socialist countries from the very beginning of a war.

In conformity with the basic tenets of Soviet military doctrine, our Armed Forces, together with the armies of the other Warsaw Pact countries, will not only repel aggression, but will also engage in decisive offensive operations with the goal of totally destroying the enemy forces. Under these conditions, regardless of the manner in which war is unleashed, combat actions will unquestionably be highly mobile in nature and will cover a large area. All this establishes the objective prerequisites for the occurrence of meeting engagements on various scales, both at the beginning of a war and during the course of it.

Rather than taking on the task of a comprehensive discussion of the entire range of problems involved in the meeting engagement, we shall discuss only those problems that are the most important from our point of view.

The question of the possibility of meeting engagements occurring when nuclear weapons are employed was sharply debated at one time in the press and at military science conferences. While no one denies the possibility that they may occur during operations in non-nuclear war, the possibility of this during a nuclear war is often subject to doubt.

Indeed, in principle, nuclear weapons make it possible to totally destroy any enemy meeting grouping during the approach to it. The loss of offensive capabilities by one side, and, under certain conditions, by both sides as a result of the exchange of nuclear strikes indisputably precludes the occurrence of a meeting engagement. However, it must be kept in mind that such destruction can be inflicted upon the enemy only by the massed and effective employment of nuclear weapons, and it will hardly be possible to accomplish this on all axes and in all sectors of the front where armed warfare is being waged.

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*Wehrkunde, 1968, No. 11, pp. 559-564.

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It is fully realistic to assume that in operations during a nuclear war certain enemy groupings will survive and that to totally destroy them will require finishing actions by large units and formations of the ground forces, which will quite probably entail meeting battles and engagements. We have been brought to this conclusion both by theoretical research conducted in recent years in the field of military art, including studies made using electronic computer equipment, and by the experience of operational training.

The results of a number of operational-strategic research games and experience derived from operational command-staff exercises demonstrate that when resolving the question of the probability of the occurrence of meeting engagements during the operations of a nuclear war it is essential to consider not only the enormous potential destructive capabilities of nuclear weapons, but also the whole series of difficulties connected with their effective and massed employment.

These difficulties stem primarily from the complexity of detecting the targets to be destroyed, determining their coordinates, and organizing their destruction in a timely manner, particularly when dealing with mobile and small targets. Therefore, it is not ordinarily possible to obtain exhaustive information on the enemy prior to the beginning of a meeting engagement, particularly not on such important and priority targets for destruction as nuclear attack means and control posts. If we take it into account that the enemy will encounter similar difficulties, we can assume that the troops of both sides will retain their offensive capabilities on a number of axes even after the exchange of nuclear strikes.

In the operational-strategic war game ZENIT (ZENITH) conducted at the General Staff Academy, the probability of the occurrence of meeting engagements after the first exchange of nuclear strikes, i.e., of meeting engagements in border areas, by which the first offensive operation of a front can begin, was studied. Calculations made by electronic computer demonstrated that such meeting engagements are most likely to occur following the simultaneous or almost simultaneous delivery of the first nuclear strike by the adversaries, and that they are least likely to occur when one of the adversaries succeeds in preempting the other's strike. However, even in the latter case, the possibility that meeting engagements will occur cannot be excluded since troops on certain axes will retain their capability for aggressive offensive actions. 50X1-HUM

In order to determine the probability of the occurrence of meeting engagements during the subsequent development of an operation, an

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appropriate mathematical model was developed in the Military Science Directorate of the General Staff. An electronic computer furnished 210 alternative evaluations of the effectiveness of the mutual employment of nuclear weapons in an operation during a meeting offensive engaged in by a combined-arms army (the second echelon of the front committed to the engagement) and a reserve army corps of the Federal Republic of Germany. Each variant made it possible to determine the value of the damage suffered by the adversaries based on: the quantity and yield of nuclear warheads available at the beginning of the engagement; the degree to which targets to be destroyed have been detected and the amount of preemption in delivering nuclear strikes, taking into consideration the combat strength of the meeting groupings; the distance between the groupings at the beginning of the engagement; the rate at which the adversaries approach each other; the amount of time between missile launches (aviation strikes); the potential percentage of nuclear strikes that will miss the target; and other constant data.

The results of the modeling demonstrated that depending on the values of the initial parameters considered in the model, losses may fluctuate within the following limits: nuclear means of attack -- from 40 to 95 percent; tank battalions -- from 10-15 to 60 percent (tanks from five to 30 percent); motorized infantry (motorized rifle) battalions -- up to 35 percent. As is obvious, the greatest damage will be suffered by nuclear means of attack, which are the primary targets for destruction. The losses of conventional means will be considerably less. As much as 70 percent or more of the personnel and tanks in meeting groupings of troops may survive, i.e., for the most part the opposing sides will retain their offensive capabilities. This in turn supports the assumption that a meeting encounter between these groupings may occur.

Modern means of waging armed warfare and the increased fire power, striking power, mobility and maneuverability of units, large units, and formations are changing the substance, nature, and methods of conducting meeting engagements, both when nuclear weapons are employed and when they are not employed.

During a nuclear war the deciding role in the destruction of an enemy meeting grouping is assigned to nuclear weapons. However, as we have already observed, a final victory cannot always be achieved by employing only these means of destruction. Nuclear strikes do not constitute the entire substance of the meeting engagement; they are only its most important part -- a phase.

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Immediately after the nuclear strikes, combat actions involving forward units, airborne landing forces, and heliborne-assault troops will be developed in order to most rapidly exploit the nuclear strikes and to create conditions conducive to the total destruction of the enemy through finishing actions carried out by the main forces. The extent to which the main forces of the ground troop grouping will participate in the final destruction of the enemy will depend on the effectiveness of the nuclear strikes inflicted on the enemy.

Therefore, in a nuclear war the meeting engagement consists of an aggregate of nuclear strikes and decisive offensive actions by troops on the ground and from the air, which are linked by a common concept, to destroy an advancing enemy grouping.

In the meeting engagement, the two basic types of combat actions appear to merge into one: offense -- inasmuch as we are pursuing an offensive goal, and to a certain extent, defense -- since the enemy is advancing on us and we are compelled to repel his attacks in certain sectors. Also, the smaller the difference between the forces of the adversaries, the more intense the engagement will be and the more frequently the adversaries will be compelled during certain periods of the engagement to resort to defense with part of their forces in order to parry the attacks of the enemy.

Consequently, when discussing the substance of a meeting engagement, one must keep in mind that it is a unique and complex mixture of different types of combat actions with offense playing the leading and decisive role since only it can bring victory in the end.

The nature of the meeting engagement in a nuclear war is mainly determined by the massed employment of nuclear weapons by the adversaries; this makes it possible to rapidly alter the balance of forces and means and thus to ensure the seizure and retention of the initiative. For this reason, from the very beginning of the engagement, combat actions will be characterized by the adversaries' endeavor to preempt the enemy in the delivery of nuclear strikes, by abrupt and frequent changes in the situation, by the short duration of these combat actions, and by the extremely limited amount of time available to organize them.

Present-day meeting engagements, unlike past ones, will probably not last 24 hours. The sudden and effective use of nuclear weapons can determine an engagement's outcome within the first few hours. Preemptive strikes make it possible to achieve victory over a more powerful enemy by

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employing even a smaller quantity of forces and means. Large units of the tank troops will have the main role in completing the destruction of the enemy since they have the greatest survivability when nuclear weapons are employed by the adversaries. This imparts to meeting engagements the nature of tank engagements.

The extensive employment of airborne landing forces, heliborne-assault (airmobile) troops, and aircraft will give rise to an intense struggle for air supremacy. Combat actions on the ground will be accompanied by fierce combat in the air, and the engagement as a whole will acquire the nature of a ground and air engagement.

From what has been said above, it follows that the most effective method of destroying an enemy meeting grouping will be the delivery of powerful preemptive nuclear strikes and the immediate exploitation of their results by airborne landing forces, tank troops and heliborne-assault troops. The task of these forces and troops is to annihilate the surviving but disorganized and substantially demoralized enemy troops by sudden and swift strikes, to deprive them of all capacity for resistance, and, eventually, to seize the enemy territory. This method of detroying the enemy is based upon recognition of the decisive role of nuclear weapons and the increasing striking and maneuvering capabilities of the troops.

The substance of meeting engagements, some of their characteristic features, and the methods of conducting them are different when they occur during a non-nuclear period of a war.

During these engagements it will be necessary to constantly combat enemy means of mass destruction and to allocate the appropriate forces and means to do so. In addition, it is essential that the rocket troops and a considerable part of the aviation be kept in constant readiness to deliver nuclear strikes at any time. Consequently, this unique "nuclear echelon" in the operational disposition of the troops must be relieved of participation in the combat with the enemy meeting grouping before the specified time. All this will have a substantial influence on the substance of the troops' tasks, their operational disposition, and on their all-round support.

The sharp increase in the proportion of tanks in the composition of the ground forces, the increase in the quality and quantity of armored 50X1-HUM equipment, aircraft, artillery and antitank means, and the vast opportunities for employing airborne landing forces and heliborne-assault units now make it possible to extend the effective range of fire power

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against the enemy. This substantially changes the former pattern of initiating, developing and concluding a meeting engagement with the gradual concentration and the successive buildup of troop efforts on narrow sectors of the front.

Aviation strikes, long-range artillery fire, and aggressive actions waged by airborne landing forces and especially by heliborne-assault units can inflict substantial damage on an enemy meeting grouping while it is still on the distant approaches to the line of probable encounter of the main forces of the adversaries. For this reason, the preemptive delivery of fire strikes and the preemptive deployment of the troops will be the most important part of the struggle to seize and retain the initiative in meeting engagements in which nuclear weapons are not employed. This struggle will intensify and will acquire the nature of highly mobile combat actions, waged at first by the forward detachments and advance guards (to preempt in seizing advantageous lines and to disrupt the orderly deployment of the enemy), and subsequently by the main forces, supported by aviation and the fire of most of the artillery (to deliver decisive attacks on the flanks and rear of the main enemy grouping).

Consequently, meeting engagements, which may occur in both nuclear and non-nuclear operations, will differ in nature and in substance from the meeting engagements of the past war. Methods of conducting combat actions will also differ in substance. As is known, in the past, meeting engagements began (were initiated) at the tactical level with combat actions conducted by forward detachments and advance guards. The period of initiation did not bring about a sharp change in the balance of forces and means of the adversaries. The decisive developments occurred only when the main forces were committed to action. The situation is now fundamentally different. In nuclear war operations, meeting engagements will begin with nuclear strikes, which are delivered during the period when the troops of the adversaries are approaching each other. The decision to employ nuclear weapons will be made by the commander of the troops of the front (army). Consequently, from the very beginning the meeting engagement will acquire the scale of an operation, and the methods used to complete the destruction of the enemy will largely depend on the results of the employment of nuclear weapons.

When the main enemy meeting grouping has suffered a substantial loss in troops, the delivery of frontal attacks to split up and destroy in detail the remnants of a large enemy grouping, made in cooperation wit50X1-HUM airborne landing forces and heliborne-assault units, can be the most effective. It should be noted that the advisability of employing frontal

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attacks in order to most rapidly exploit the results of nuclear strikes is often underestimated during operational training. Frontal attacks are considered a primitive form of maneuver that does not satisfy the basic requirements for conducting a meeting engagement. In our opinion, under the conditions being considered, when the combat effectiveness of the enemy has been undermined by nuclear strikes, it is precisely through the delivery of frontal attacks to split up the enemy grouping that the total destruction of the enemy can be completed in the shortest possible time.

In its final phase the meeting engagement will become fragmented into multiple centers of actions of a large variety, primarily offensive, to complete the destruction of the enemy who is retreating, defending, and on the offensive on certain axes. His total destruction can be accomplished by employing not only battle formations but also approach march formations, which require comparatively little time. The main forces of the army (front), and, first of all, the tank troops, without waiting for the total destruction of the remnants of the enemy, will develop a swift offensive into the depth in order to achieve the goals of the operation.

When nuclear weapons are not effectively employed or there is a shortage of them, and when the main enemy troop grouping retains its combat effectiveness and its ability to proceed with an offensive which has decisive objectives, it will be necessary to allocate the main forces of the formation to carry out finishing actions. When this occurs, as a rule it will be advisable to divide the main forces into holding and attack groupings. With part of the forces, one should endeavor to repel the offensive of the enemy on his main axis of operation, while the main forces deliver decisive attacks upon his flank and rear.

One must not fail to take into consideration that the delivery of flank attacks on an operational scale under nuclear warfare conditions, and especially during a meeting engagement, presents great difficulty. This is primarily because of the extremely complex radiation situation, possible areas of destruction in the road network, and other factors that will often preclude the carrying out of a deep enveloping maneuver by the troops. It is therefore essential that the strike grouping attempt to occupy a favorable flank position in relation to the enemy as early as possible.

Under these conditions the delivery of frontal attacks will be justifiable only in the absence of conditions favorable to the carrying out of a flank maneuver. However, even then it is advisable to make maximum use of flank attacks on a large unit and unit scale.

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Depending on the extent to which the enemy has been destroyed by nuclear weapons and on the condition and position of our troops, the army (front) may deliver two or three attacks, one of which will be the main attack. Ordinarily at least two divisions in an army will be operating on the axis of the main attack. In order to completely destroy a large enemy grouping surviving on the axis of the main attack in a front meeting engagement, it is desirable to have a tank army -- the main striking power of the front -- since a meeting engagement on such a large scale will ordinarily be the culminating moment in the achievement of the goals of the offensive operation.

It is advisable to complete the destruction of a large enemy meeting grouping by having all the forces of the first echelon attack simultaneously following a most powerful series of nuclear strikes that will be delivered by tactical nuclear means. In view of the very strong tactical nuclear potential of the enemy, it is of great importance that he be preempted in deploying these means and delivering strikes if success is to be achieved in the initial phase of the engagement. For this reason the missile units of large units and formations must make maximum use of their advantages in launch range.

It is also very important to preempt the enemy in deploying his main forces, especially tank forces. When the troops of the first echelon are at varying distances from the line of encounter and it is impossible to deliver a simultaneous powerful attack, successive attacks must be boldly employed as the large units approach in order to deprive the enemy of the opportunity to reorganize. This principle of the offensive takes on special importance during a meeting engagement where gaining time and the initiative are the guarantee of success.

In our opinion, in examining methods of completing the destruction of the enemy, two important factors must be stressed.

First, the primary role in carrying out the tasks of this period belongs, as usual, to nuclear weapons and, in particular, to tactical nuclear weapons when battle formations on both sides have been deeply penetrated and intermingled. When nuclear weapons are introduced at the regimental and battalion level, their role in rapidly completing the destruction of the enemy increases.

Second, completing the destruction of the first echelon of the enemy operational grouping is of decisive importance. As the experience of wars and exercises has demonstrated, this ensures complete seizure of the

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initiative and, in effect, accomplishes the goal of the meeting engagement. For this reason, besides the immediate destruction of enemy nuclear means of attack, control posts, and air defense means through the use of nuclear weapons, the main efforts of the formation should be concentrated on the destruction of the most important targets of the first echelon of the meeting grouping, mainly its armored forces core.

Approaching reserves may be combated by checking their advance and cutting them off from the engagement area. This is accomplished by delivering systematic aviation strikes employing primarily chemical and conventional means, particularly incendiary mixtures and aerial bombs and mines, and also by carrying out long-range artillery strikes, by employing airborne landing forces on the routes of advance of the reserves, and by setting up various obstacles. In simultaneously defeating and totally destroying an entire enemy grouping, and particularly in employing nuclear weapons, a diffusion of efforts will only prolong the process of the final destruction of the enemy. In a meeting engagement of a nuclear war, the second echelon and reserves of an army (front) obviously may be most frequently used to exploit a success in the interest of the operation as a whole.

The overall picture of the development of a meeting engagement in operations employing only conventional means of destruction will also differ substantially from that of a meeting engagement during the last war. The increased combat capabilities of means of destruction and troops make it possible to sharply increase the depth of simultaneous action against the enemy and inflict considerable losses on him at the very beginning of a meeting engagement, thus assuring the swift gaining of fire superiority and the seizure of the initiative. The struggle for superiority and the initiative will immediately take on a decisive character and cover a large area. The engagement will begin with aviation and long-range artillery strikes and aggressive actions waged by airmobile troops and airborne landing forces.

At the same time, combat actions will be developed by the forward detachments and advance guards. These will consist primarily of tank units and motorized infantry in combat vehicles possessing cross-country capability and great fire power. The tanks and motorized infantry, operating in integrated battle formations, are capable of delivering attacks from the march at high speed against attacking and advancing enemy groupings, of disorganizing their actions and of seizing and firmly holding lines advantageous for the deployment of the main attack grouping and its organized commitment to the engagement.

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Troop actions to destroy the meeting enemy will in this case be characterized by a number of features which are typical of nuclear war operations, for example, they cover a large area and have similar operational troop formations and forms of maneuvers. However, non-nuclear actions, which by definition employ only conventional means of warfare and are carried out under the constant threat of the employment of nuclear weapons, will require fundamentally different methods and procedures for defeating the enemy.

It is possible to more or less precisely distinguish the different phases of a meeting engagement in a nuclear period; there is the decisive destruction of the enemy by nuclear weapons during the period when the troops of the adversaries are approaching each other, and the destruction of the enemy is completed during the course of the direct clash of the main groupings. Non-nuclear actions, however, will involve a single, more homogeneous process of defeating meeting groupings in which the decisive destruction of the enemy is achieved by having powerful attacks delivered directly by the main forces of the ground troops, regardless of how much they have been weakened by preliminary aviation and artillery strikes.

During a meeting engagement in which only conventional means of destruction are employed, the number of army (front) attacks is limited to one or two, especially when there is not enough artillery, because of the necessity of massing forces and means. The importance of flank attacks accordingly increases, since great possibilities for maneuvering arise.

In our opinion, it is advisable to reduce the depth of the march and operational (battle) disposition of the troops in order to quickly concentrate efforts on the main axis and to deploy the troops. This will be fully justified in the absence of an immediate threat of the employment of nuclear weapons. The delivery of powerful attacks on a narrow front, primarily on the adjacent flanks of large units, on one or from various axes, will ensure the splitting up of the main enemy grouping and its subsequent destruction in detail. Simultaneous attacks will attain greater importance than during nuclear actions since they are the only means of achieving decisive superiority over the enemy.

Bold maneuvering actions by troops, especially tank troops, can contribute to the achievement of success even when the balance of forces on certain axes is disadvantageous. This is one of the main advantages of conducting a meeting engagement before attacking an enemy on the defensiv50X1-HUM in the latter case the conditions for a troop maneuver are considerably worse since it is necessary to establish numerical superiority on selected

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axes in order to break through the defense. Our operational calculations do not always take this factor into consideration even though it is obviously of great importance in determining methods of destroying the enemy.

Typical of a meeting engagement in the non-nuclear period of a war will be the encirclement of individual enemy meeting groupings, including large ones, followed by their fragmentation and destruction in detail by tank and motorized rifle troops acting in extremely close cooperation with aviation, artillery, airborne landing forces and heliborne-assault units. It can be assumed that the process of defeating the enemy will be more protracted and will require the participation of the second echelon and the reserves. It will be particularly important that measures to protect open flanks and unit boundary lines, especially antitank measures, be taken, and that a zonal air defense of the troops during the period of their deployment be set up in good time.

It is likely that the specific nature of the meeting engagement will be most apparent in the sphere of troop control. The struggle for the initiative and the striving of the adversaries to preempt each other's deployment of forces and delivery of strikes require that the command and staffs be exceptionally efficient in accomplishing organizational tasks relating to the preparation of troops for the engagement, be persistent in implementing the decision adopted, and at the same time react swiftly and flexibly to a change in the situation during the engagement.

The conditions under which meeting engagements occur are such that in the majority of cases it is impossible to clearly distinguish between the period of their preparation and the beginning of combat actions. Attacks on an enemy meeting grouping can be delivered from the march without pausing or stopping. They will be a continuation and development of the preceding combat actions of the troops.

This is especially typical of operations carried out with the use of means of mass destruction. Nuclear and chemical strikes, which are stipulated by the concept for routing the enemy during the meeting engagement, may be delivered while full-scale preparation for the engagement has not yet been completed. During this period the staffs and other control organs will be required to gather, process, and transmit an extremely large volume of information. Estimates indicate that if the 50X1-HUM average daily flow of information during an army offensive operation is taken as unity, then during the period of the most intense combat actions, which includes the meeting engagement, the flow of information increases

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three to four times.

During both the preparation and course of the engagement, continuous control over all types of reconnaissance acquires decisive importance. Data relating to enemy actions must be received regularly and in time to permit the preparation of preemptive strikes against the enemy employing nuclear, chemical, and conventional means of destruction. For this reason the chief of intelligence of the formation, bypassing intermediate levels, must be able to assign or amplify tasks for any type of reconnaissance and obtain reports.

When a meeting engagement is conducted under conditions of the unrestricted employment of means of mass destruction it is quite difficult to gather data on the radioactive and chemical contamination of the terrain and on the other aftereffects of nuclear and chemical strikes. If this task is to be successfully accomplished, the operational staffs must have directly subordinate to them powerful mobile means for radiation, chemical, and engineer reconnaissance, which are installed in helicopters and aircraft and are capable of swiftly reconnoitering routes of advance, deployment lines, and zones of forthcoming troop actions.

Because of the extremely uneven development of combat actions, it is extremely difficult to obtain information on the position of one's own troops. The time in which it may be acquired is limited to the time available for preparing nuclear and chemical strikes against the enemy, since the determination that the troops are at a safe distance is an integral part of the preparation of data. Calculations show that it is necessary to sharply reduce the amount of time employed for the collection of data on the position of one's own troops. There are two possible ways of accomplishing this: either by bypassing several intermediate levels when transmitting this information, or by putting at the disposal of operational staffs such means as would enable them to ascertain the forward line of their own troops. The troops must have special radiotechnical means for marking their position, which would be recorded by recording devices installed in an aircraft (helicopter) with enough accuracy to ensure the safety of the troops during the delivery of nuclear strikes. Considering the present level of development of radioelectronics, this task is completely feasible.

We therefore have come to the conclusion that the operational staffs must be able to obtain the required minimum of information needed to come to a decision using the forces and means directly subordinate to them. 50X1-HUM This method of gathering data on the situation in no way diminishes the

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importance of the normal procedure of obtaining data from subordinate staffs and certainly does not replace it. It will be needed in those cases when the conditions which have developed do not permit delay in making basic important decisions, and when the situation is changing rapidly and abruptly as a result of the massed employment of nuclear weapons.

During a meeting engagement it will become necessary to react quickly to frequent, abrupt changes in the situation, to continually amplify the troops' tasks, to change the axes of strikes, and often to switch from one type of combat action to another. This will require flexible and varied forms of troop control. The basic forms are the issuance of brief instructions and the receipt of reports from subordinates via technical communications means. In some instances officers, who are familiar with the commander's concept, may go (by motor vehicle or by air) to subordinate staffs to help restore cooperation which has been disrupted, to amplify tasks, to gather data on the situation, and to solve other problems. Large units can organize observation of the battlefield from helicopters.

The form of control that was widely employed during the last war, which consisted of the commander personally going to the command posts of subordinate large units (formations) where the most intense situation was developing, is hardly acceptable now. Such trips now may cause loss of control. In our opinion, it is advisable that the commander remain at the command post which ensures the most stable communications with the troops.

Under modern conditions there must be a somewhat different approach to the problems involved in the functioning of control posts. Until the present time, the fact that control posts were moved closer to the line of encounter of the troops was an invariable feature of control during a meeting engagement. This reflected the attempt both to ensure the personal influence of the commander on the course of the combat actions and to create more favorable conditions for the maintenance of stable communications with subordinate commanders and staffs. Today these reasons cannot be considered persuasive.

Research demonstrates that locating the control posts of operational formations close to the line of encounter of the troops does not help in maintaining stable operation of communications. The possession by the enemy of a large quantity of tactical nuclear means of attack capable of delivering strikes against small targets at ranges of up to 40 kilometers with great accuracy at any time, makes the destruction of control posts and communications centers located within range of these means highly probable. In addition, modern radio communications means at the operational level

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have a range 1.5 to two times greater than those employed during the last war. Also, during a meeting engagement it is impossible to rule out sudden breakthroughs by enemy tank groupings which can threaten control posts.

We are firmly convinced that the army (front) commander must remain at the command post with most of his staff personnel and the chiefs of the branch arms. Modern radioelectronic equipment can substantially compensate for the limited opportunities for personal observation of the battlefield and contact with subordinates. For example, television reconnaissance, observation, and communications systems will be of great assistance to commanders and staffs in this. Some models of such equipment, in both air and ground versions, have already been developed.

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